OMUN V

European Union (November 2016)

Chair Letter

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to OMUN V! My name is John Papanikolaou, and I am so excited to serve as your head chair for the European Union (EU) Committee. I'll be working alongside some amazing vice chairs who will collectively form your dais. I am a grade 11 student here at Upper Canada College, and this is my third OMUN. I've had the pleasure of attending and awarding at some memorable conferences such as SSUNS (McGill), UTMUN (UofT) and HMUN (Harvard).

Having family living in the European Union (in Greece), being able to chair this committee is a real treat. Your dais has been working over the past several months to prepare for you an action-packed weekend filled with engaging debate and diplomacy.

The upcoming committee will be historical, meaning that it will take place in the past (November 2016). As such, please avoid using sources after that time period to preserve historical accuracy. The two topics that we will be addressing, the refugee crisis and Brexit, will look at some of the pivotal moments in the EU's history which have shaped the EU today. We are really looking forward to seeing each of your stances on these complex issues.

I would also like to take this opportunity to remind you of the need to submit position papers. Please ensure that they are submitted by the deadline posted on the OMUN website in order to be considered for awards. Position papers are an important way to make sure that all delegates are researched and thus increase the quality of committee as a whole (also, they're fun for the dias to read!).

On a final note, this background guide should only be a starting point for your research. To begin your external research, we would encourage each delegate to answer guiding questions at the end of each topic and to use the sources which we have included in our bibliography as well as the "additional sources" section. As well, we would encourage you to research past actions that your country has taken on the matter. We're excited to meet all of you on April 4! In the meantime, please do not hesitate to reach out to us at our committee email if you have any questions.

John Papanikolaou,
Head Chair

Topic 1:

**Migrant Crisis**

Displaced Persons

At the end of 2015, there were 65.3 million forcibly displaced people. The top three countries of origin for these refugees are Syria, Afghanistan and Somalia, who together account for over ½ of all refugees globally. Turkey hosts the largest amount of these refugees, with 2.7 million Syrians[1].

The demographic of these refugees has also changed significantly in the past decade; the amount of child refugees has more than doubled in the past decade, partially because growing numbers of children are crossing the border alone.

The committee's job on the topic of refugees is to consider the best way to manage the refugee crisis and determine the extent to which the EU should help with this crisis.

A Background to the Crisis

For the past five years, Syria has been embroiled in a bloody civil war with no end in sight. Some estimates pin the death toll at a quarter million persons.[2] The civil war in Syria has led to a mass exodus, with the final intended destinations for many refugees being Europe, since Syrians can no longer gain legal entrance into most other Arab countries.
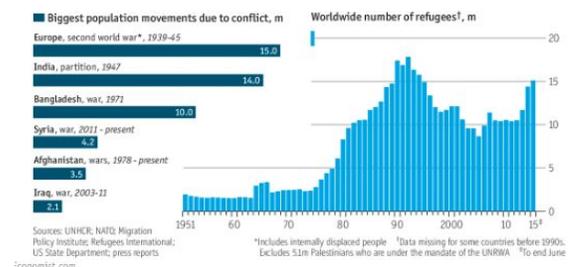
Source: The Economist

This situation has led to roughly four million displaced Syrians living in Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan without secure legal status. Most are unable to work as they lack the proper legal permits, and very few have access to an education system. Past solutions such as refugee camps have failed, with only ⅕ of Syrians living in these camps.

---

[1] World Economic Forum
[2] CNN

Origins of the Refugee and Migrant Crisis in Europe

Roughly 370 000 refugees and migrants have arrived in Europe in 2016, predominantly through Greece and Italy.[3] After their bordering countries (such as Hungary) closed their borders to these refugees, routes to central Europe, which is generally the intended destination for these refugees, have become shut off. Refugees in Europe are mainly of Syrian, Afghan, Pakistani or Eritrean origin.

Dangers of Travel to Europe

The journey to Europe that most refugees experience in crossing the Mediterranean to reach Europe is far from secure. On 2 September 2015, the image of Alan Kurdi, a three-year old Syrian boy, made global headlines after his body washed up on a Turkish beach after his family attempted to travel from Turkey to the Greek island of Kos.[4]

Part of the reason for the increased risk that refugees now face when travelling is greater European investment in border security. Since 2011, the EU has prioritized border security, spending 2 billion euros on border security compared to 700 million on reception conditions for refugees.[5] Part of the reason for this increased border spending is in the rise of anti-refugee movements in countries such as Italy, who carried out 6,000 forced and voluntary deportations in 2016 alone.[6]

More intense border security increases the risk of travel because it increases the reliance of refugees on human smugglers. Human smugglers are notorious for their lack of regard for the safety of the refugees which they transport. For instance, low-quality inflatable boats used for transport are often overcrowded, increasing the chance of

---

[3] Ibid.
[4] NBC News
[5] World Economic Forum
[6] CNBC

capsizing. Additionally, there have also been repeated cases of fake life jackets being distributed, equivalent to a death sentence in the case of a capsizing.[7]

NGO rescue organizations, navies, and coast guards have saved the lives of countless refugees attempting to cross the Mediterranean. In cases where the boats of smugglers capsize, NGO rescue boats take on refugees, saving their lives in the process[8] Countries such as Italy, however, have tightened control on NGO sea rescues as a mechanism of deterring refugees from arriving, hence increasing the peril which refugees already experience on their journey to Europe.

Reluctance of Member States to Accept Refugees

The main motivation against accepting refugees is domestic political considerations. First of all there is a dramatic rise of Islamophobia, the fear, hatred of, or prejudice against the Islamic religion or Muslims generally. Given the rise of anti-Muslim sentiments, the political parties that target to keep public support to win elections cannot make bold moves with regard to Syrian refugees.

There are many examples of Islamophobia rising in Europe.
-A 2016 study shows that forty-nine percent of people in Britain did not want to accept refugees while only 20 percent agreed to accept more refugees.
-A recent poll shows that only 22 percent of Germans believe that Islam belongs to their country, and an overwhelming 61 per cent agreed that Islam does not belong to Germany.
-In France, the legislators passed bills limiting Muslims in the public sphere and the French National Front leader, Marine le Pen, has recently targeted Muslims on several occasions.
-In November 2015, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban said that "terrorists have exploited mass migration by mingling in European societies."

Second, the uphill trajectory of far-right parties makes the open-door policies even more difficult as mainstream political parties are concerned to lose the social base to the far right alternatives. Delegates should keep these two main causes in mind as they debate this issue.

---

[7] World Health Organization
[8] The Guardian

Questions to Consider

1. How will the EU balance sovereignty concerns of some member states while balancing the need to settle refugees?
2. What actions should the EU take regarding refugee travel across the Mediterranean?
3. Does the EU have an obligation to help with the crisis?
4. How does your country's domestic policy inform your stance on the migrant crisis?

Works Cited:

"Smugglers Jailed In Turkey Over Death Of Syrian Toddler Aylan Kurdi". 2016. NBC News.
https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/europes-border-crisis/smugglers-jailed-turkey-over-death-syrian-toddler-aylan-kurdi-n531711.

Ellyatt, Holly. 2018. "'Pack Your Bags,' Italy's New Leaders Tell 500,000 Illegal Migrants — But It'll Cost Them". CNBC.
https://www.cnbc.com/2018/06/04/pack-your-bags-italys-new-leaders-tell-500000-illegal-migrants--but-itll-cost-them.html.

"Fake Lifejackets Play A Role In Drowning Of Refugees". 2016. Bulletin Of The World Health Organization 94 (6): 411-412. doi:10.2471/blt.16.020616.

Tondo, Lorenzo. 2019. "Mediterranean Will Be 'Sea Of Blood' Without Rescue Boats, UN Warns". The Guardian.
https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jun/09/mediterranean-sea-of-blood-migrant-refugee-rescue-boats-un-unhcr.

"What Is Islamophobia?". 2020. Open Society Foundations.Org.
https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/explainers/islamophobia-europe.

"Testing The Argument Beyond The Scope Of The Study". 2019. Alien Citizens, 183-205. doi:10.1017/9781108692649.008.
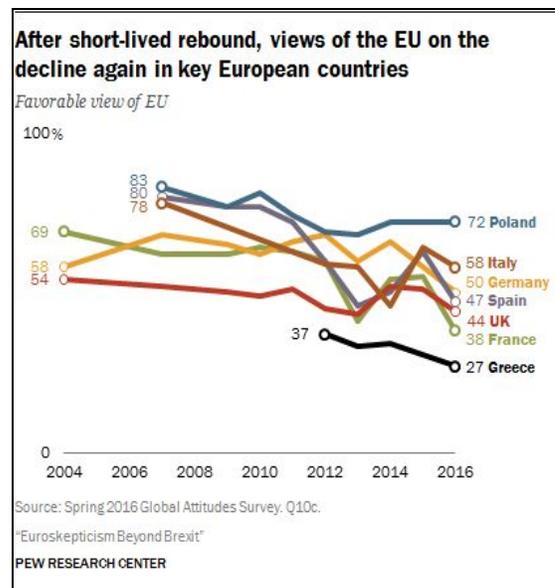
Topic 2:

Brexit

Background Information:

Fueled by the migrant crisis and the recent economic trouble in the European Union, there has been a dramatic increase of anti-EU parties. Although Eurosceptisim have existed for many decades, the combined effects of the 2009 recession, the debt crisis and high levels of unemployment in Southern European states have stoked the fire of deep mistrust against European integration. In addition, rising nationalism in member states makes it imperative that the EU take concrete action to reform itself for its survival and the wellbeing of the 500 million Europeans it represents.[9]

This scepticism has found its hearth in Anti-EU parties, or political parties with fundamental policies that oppose European integration.[10] Notable anti-EU parties include the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), the Freedom Party of Austria, and the National Front in France[11]. Historically, euroscepticism has played a significant role in severely hindering the process to European connectivity and the formation of the EU. The Maastricht Treaty in 1992, which created the European Union, was rejected by Denmark and France only narrowly passed it with 51% of the vote in favor.[12]

After short-lived rebound, views of the EU on the decline again in key European countries

Favorable view of EU

Source: Spring 2016 Global Attitudes Survey. Q10c.
"Euroskepticism Beyond Brexit"
PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Eurosceptic Ideologies:

It is important to note that there are two types of Eurosceptic Ideologies: hard and soft.[13] Hard euroscepticism is the complete and outright rejection of European Union as a

---

[9] Encyclopaedia Britannica
[10] Foundation Robert Schuman
[11] Sussex European Institute
[12] Encyclopaedia Britannica
[13] Ibid.

mechanism for European political and economic integration. Hard Eurosceptic believers oppose their countries from joining the EU and strongly support their country to leave the EU. Soft eurosceptics take a more moderate approach. They are not completely opposed to the idea of European integration. They prefer to observe changes to policy and national interests and make their decisions from there. Euroscepticism is found in all political parties and groups across the spectrum, both left-wing and right-wing though the majority is found in populist parties. Although they criticise the EU for many of the same reasons, Eurosceptic left-wing populists focus more on economic issues while Eurosceptic right-wing populists focus more on nationalism and immigration. The rise in radical right-wing parties since the 2000s is strongly linked to a rise in Euroscepticism.

Brexit:

British Prime Minister David Cameron decided to truly define his country's complex relationship to the European Union as well as address the rising number of Eurosceptic sentiment in the UK. PM Cameron outlined his goals in a letter to European Council President Donald Tusk in November 2015, and an agreement was reached in February 2016. A referendum was scheduled for 2016 as to whether Great Britain will continue to be a part of the European Union. On June 23, 2016, 52 percent of British people voted to leave the EU. Eurosceptic parties in Europe harped on this sudden and unexpected victory, promising to hold referendums in their own countries.

Economic Concerns:

There is strong evidence concluding that the recent fall in popularity of the EU has also had a lot to do with the worsening economic situation caused by the mishandling and overextension of resources during the migrant crisis, the economic recession of 2009, and the resulting debt and unemployment crises.[14] Throughout the history of the EU, there has been a strong correlation between the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of a member state and


---
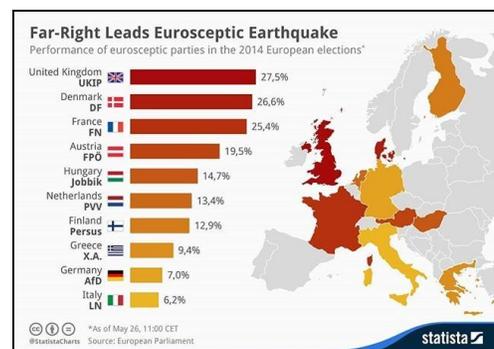
[14] European Central Bank

public opinion about the EU, with lower or shrinking GDPs associated with more Euroscepticism and vice versa. This correlation, as well as the connection between high unemployment and anti-EU sentiments, prove that domestic concerns can contribute to Euroscepticism as a whole as the EU is built on the promise of a better, more united Europe that works to help Europe thrive. However, "the long years of the European economic crisis may have provoked a fading of "output legitimacy" and a blossoming of contestation against the EU." Another interesting note is that non-EU nations have a much more positive view of the EU than actual member states, mainly because they do not experience the economic impacts of regional integration.

Trade Agreements:

Now that the United Kingdom is committing to triggering Article 50 and exiting the European Union, it will no longer be party to any of the trappings and agreements that Member States are bound to.[15] Instead, the UK will be treated as just another non-EU country, with which an EU-UK trade agreement must be negotiated. Since EU countries are the UK's largest trading partners by such a huge margin, there is virtually universal consensus among economists and world leaders that Brexit will hurt the British and European economies. The question is however: to what extent is the damage?

UK trade with EU and non-EU countries
£ billion, 2015, Goods and services
Source: ONS
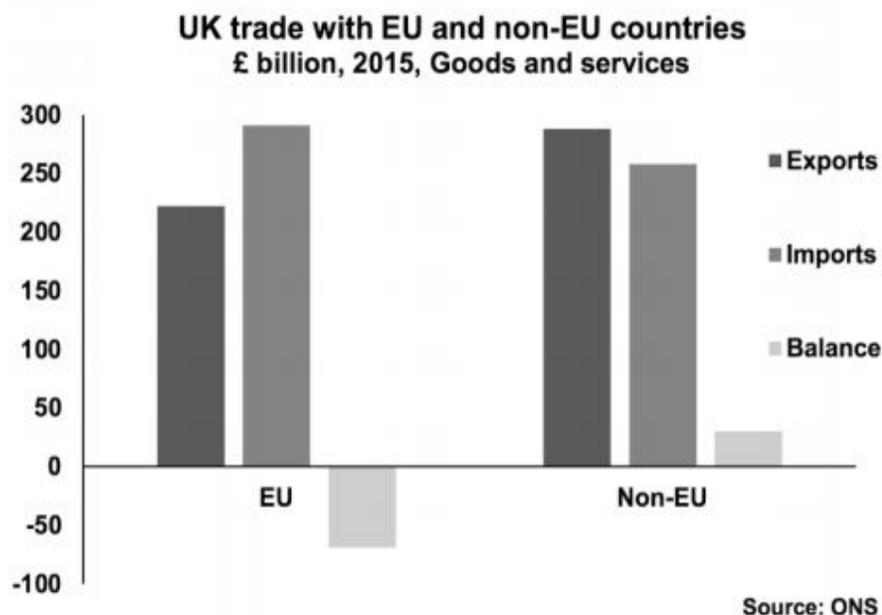
[15] United Kingdom, House of Commons

The goal of the British government in negotiating a trade deal post-Brexit is to retain access to the European Single Market, which would help weather the worst effects of a Brexit. However, maintaining access to the single market will prove difficult and problematic in many respects. The British government wishes to maintain autonomy in many areas (e.g. immigration, trade policy), as one of the key motivators of the Vote Leave campaign was the notion of "taking our country back". Therefore, access to the single market will need to be balanced with other UK priorities, such as "free movement of people, contributions to the EU budget, the extent to which the UK needs to adopt EU rules and the extent of UK influence over those rules."

Hard or Soft Brexit?:

Current scenarios fall somewhere between two extremes: what have been coined a "hard Brexit" and a "soft Brexit". In terms of trade, a hard Brexit would pull the UK out of all existing EU agreements and mechanisms, including the European Single Market and the Customs Union. This approach is advocated by hardline leaders of the Leave campaign, who argue that a hard Brexit would give the UK the most autonomy and control over its own affairs. The UK would not be subject to freedom of movement or any EU regulations. Advocates of this approach also argue that a hard Brexit

Brexit: Deal Or No Deal For The EU?
Estimated GDP loss in a "no-deal Brexit" compared to a non-Brexit scenario (in percent)

United Kingdom	3.9
Ireland	3.8
EU	1.5
Netherlands	1.1
Denmark	1.0
Belgium	0.9
Czechia	0.9
Sweden	0.6
Hungary	0.6
Germany	0.5
Poland	0.4
Austria	0.4
Greece	0.4
Portugal	0.4
Slovakia	0.4
Slovenia	0.3
France	0.2
Spain	0.2
Italy	0.2
Finland	0.2

@StatistaCharts Source: IMF via The Guardian

statista

would not be disastrous for trade, as trade with EU countries would therefore fall back on World Trade Organization (WTO) rules. It is unclear if the UK would simply inherit its prior rules as a EU member and change them afterwards, or if the process is more arduous—the WTO procedure here is unclear. Most economic analyses conclude that falling back on WTO rules would also prove the most mutually harmful to both European and British economies.[16]

A soft Brexit would entail abiding by EU regulations to some degree, paying some EU dues, and respecting the four freedoms in return for "unfettered access to the European Single Market." However, the UK would lose its privileges as a Member State, losing representatives in the European Parliament, on the European Commission, etc. It would
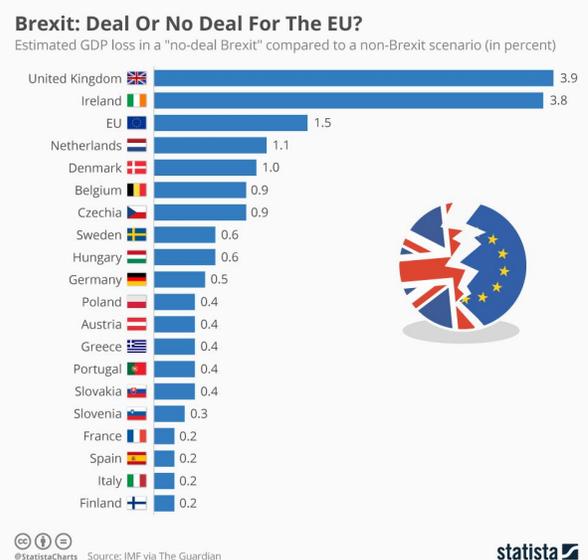
[16] Independent.co.uk

therefore have no say in the legislation process of the EU—on laws that may apply to the UK itself. This soft Brexit could be achieved by joining the European Economic Area, which effectively brings some non-EU states into the single market.

A good example of this case is Norway, which many see as a possible model for future UK-EU relations. Norway is part of the European Single Market through the EEA, and participates in selected EU programs. In return, it pays dues for both the EEA and whichever programs it chooses to participate in. It also applies approximately 21% of all existing EU regulations, but has no vote or representation in EU institutions. Similar issues would have to be negotiated by the UK.

A middle ground between a hard and soft Brexit may be a free trade agreement (FTA) between the European Union and the UK. This presents a more moderate option, as it would likely represent "less access to the Single Market but also fewer obligations in terms of accepting free movement of people and making a contribution to the EU budget." Any exports to the EU would still have to comply with relevant regulations, but leaving the customs union would allow the UK to set its own external tariffs.

Questions to Consider:

1. What changes to your nation want to see in the functioning of the EU?

2. What steps does the EU need to take in terms of negotiating a Brexit deal with the UK?

3. To what extent will the UK access the single market, and what kind of bargaining chips will be
given up in return?

4. To what extent will the UK continue abiding by EU laws and regulations?

5. Will the UK follow a model for Brexit? If so, which one?

Works Cited:

2020. Ecb.Europa.Eu.
https://www.ecb.europa.eu/pub/pdf/scpwps/ecbwp1815.en.pdf?a92b34242be422b2d27
9b27105d-490cb.

"Euroscepticism And Europhobia: The Threat Of Populism". 2015. Robert-Schuman.Eu.
https://www.robert-schuman.eu/en/european-issues/0375-euroscepticism-and-europhobi
a-europe-under-the-test-of-populism.

"Euroscepticism | Politics". 2020. Encyclopedia Britannica.
https://www.britannica.com/topic/Euroskepticism.

"EU In Figures | European Union". 2016. European Union.
https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/figures/living_en.

"The Difference Between 'Hard' And 'Soft' Brexit". 2016. The Independent.
https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/brexit-hard-soft-what-is-the-difference-u
k-eu-single-market-freedom-movement-theresa-may-a7342591.html.

Additional Resources:

1. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34131911

2. https://www.forbes.com/sites/johnmauldin/2016/07/05/3-reasons-brits-voted-for-brexit/#39d959f41f9d

3. https://www.cnn.com/2018/11/17/uk/non-brits-guide-to-brexit-update-gbr-trnd-intl/index.html

4. https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/for-those-crossing-the-mediterranean-a-higher-risk-of-death/

5. https://www.theatlantic.com/notes/2015/09/europe-refugee-crisis-war/403315/

6. https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-roots-of-the-migration-crisis-1441995372

7. https://www.dw.com/en/italy-salvini-is-out-but-migrants-still-endure-his-policies/a-50229057

8. https://www.ft.com/content/bfabfcc2-c882-11e7-aa33-c63fdc9b8c6c